

R 181432Z JUL 08  
FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2753  
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS CONAKRY 000380

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: GUINEA'S NEW GOVERNMENT TAKES FIRST STEPS ON  
ELECTIONS

REF: CONAKRY 361

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. In a meeting with international donors, the Senior Elections Steering Committee outlined the next steps for upcoming legislative elections in late 2008. MinFin Dore said that budget outlays have been authorized for July, August, and September, but that a sizeable funding shortfall exists. Government and independent election officials gave the appearance of close coordination, with the GoG eager to press ahead. The G8 representatives advised the government to further stress the application of election laws evenly across the political spectrum. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The Guinean Senior Election Steering Committee, consisting of Minister of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs (MATAP) Sekouba Bangoura, the president of the Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) Ben Sekou Sylla, and MinFin Ousmane Dore, met with the international donor community on July 15. The donors included the U.S. and French representatives, the World Bank, ECOWAS, and the EU, the U.N. coordinator.

¶3. (U) Bangoura opened by reaffirming his commitment to credible, well organized, and transparent elections. He said preparations would consist of two phases: revision of the electoral lists, and organization of the election itself. MATAP, the CENI, and the Steering Committee then presented the technical and financial details of their progress. (NOTE: Post will scan and email these documents to AF/W. END NOTE.)

¶4. (U) MinFin Dore said that the GoG had authorized the election financing for July, August, and September, but had not yet allocated the funds. Addressing a financing gap of GNF 114 billion (\$26.8 million), Dore said that the budget should be scoured for unnecessary items. He said that the GoG by itself would not be able to fully finance the budget. (NOTE: The USAID Director noted that the GoG had underreported USAID's contribution to the election. The USAID Director said he will follow up to correct the GoG's information. END NOTE.)

¶5. (U) Ambassador Carter raised the subject of CENI preparedness outside Conakry. Extensive travel in the provinces by the Ambassador and his team revealed that provincial branches were "not prepared" for the elections, and were waiting on guidance from the CENI leadership. He noted that the weakest CENI organs were those furthest from Conakry. Bangoura and Sylla acknowledged this problem and said they would work to bolster communication with the upcountry representatives. Bangoura added: "If the CENI doesn't work, I can't do my job."

¶6. (U) The EU representative, the U.N. coordinator, and Ambassador Carter urged MATAP and the CENI to increase communication with the public to clearly highlight the government's neutrality during the election. The donors said the Kouyate government had made this announcement, but it was important for the Square government reiterate the importance of the government's political neutrality in the conduct of the elections. The steering committee agreed.

¶7. (U) The EU representative reminded Bangoura that a date for the start of the political campaign is required by law.

She asked him if MATAP would enforce this date for incumbent members of the ruling party, some of whom have begun campaigning beforehand. Bangoura said he would look into it and take the proper steps to enforce the electoral code with respect to all parties.

18. (SBU) Despite Dore's outspoken commitment on elections at the meeting, we have learned that the election funds have not yet been released. The prime minister has subsequently ordered Dore to obligate the funds immediately.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

19. (SBU) The improvement in the level of cooperation between CENI and MATAP officials, at least on the surface, was striking. Whereas Ben Sylla's relationship with the Kouyate government was notoriously bad, he seemed to be working hand-in-glove with Bangoura. Both seemed genuinely concerned about taking substantive steps toward the elections. Bangoura also openly repeated much of what he told Ambassador Carter in private (reftel). As previously noted, Bangoura is saying all the right things. It remains to be seen if he can deliver. Ben Sylla made few comments about the budget outside of his prepared remarks. Some observers believe he intentionally inflated the budget since this might well be the CENI's only opportunity to secure funding. END COMMENT.

CARTER